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Chairman: Mr. VILCHEZ ASHER (Nicaragua)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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The meeting was called to order 10.10 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 120: SCALE OF ASSESSMENTS FOR THE APPORTIONMENT OF THE EXPENSES OF THE UNITED NATIONS (A/49/897; A/50/11)

1. Mr. ETUKET (Chairman of the Committee on Contributions), introducing the report of the Committee on Contributions on its fifty-fifth session (A/50/11), said that, after conducting a comprehensive review of the scale methodology, as requested by the General Assembly in resolution 48/223 C, the Committee on Contributions had decided that more careful reflection was needed on the various issues involved and that the review should thus continue at its next session. It intended to submit a final report to the General Assembly before the end of its fiftieth session.

2. In particular the Committee felt that the issues raised by the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Working Group on the Implementation of the Principle of Capacity to Pay required further study, as did such aggregates as gross domestic product, gross national product, national income and debt-adjusted income. The Committee had noted the suggestion by the Ad Hoc Working Group that gross national product, rather than national income, should be used as a first approximation of capacity to pay, and it would give special attention to the problems that had tended to inflate the statistics of the former centrally planned economies.

3. The Committee was still of the view that the base period should be a multiple of the scale period and should not be less than the scale period. Further discussion was, however, needed to determine a base period that would reflect current capacity to pay while preserving stability and predictability in the scale.

4. Discussion of conversion rates should be refocused in order to develop new criteria to replace market exchange rates in situations where the latter produced excessive distortions in the incomes of Member States. There was also a need to reach a common understanding on debt-burden adjustment and low per capita income adjustment before the preparation of the next scale.

5. The Committee believed that the anomaly whereby the rates of assessment of some Member States, including some least developed countries with country shares below 0.01 per cent, had been raised to the floor could be partially addressed by lowering the floor. It also intended to take up the issue of the ceiling at its next session, and, in that connection, he recalled that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 48/223 B, the scheme of limits was to be completely phased out in the next scale.

6. The Committee had considered representations from Turkey, Kyrgyzstan, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic and Iraq, each of which related either to the rate of assessment, the application of Article 19 of the Charter, or compensatory arrangements pursuant to Article 50, or some combination thereof. While the Committee was sympathetic, it could not respond to requests in connection with Article 50, as that was beyond its mandate.

7. With regard to Turkey's representation, although Turkey had been treated as a developing country it had not benefited from the scheme of limits in the previous scale. It could therefore not be subject to the 15 per cent limitation on the effect of the phase-out of the scheme of limits mandated by the General Assembly. Further, the data used for arriving at Turkey's rate of assessment had come from relevant official sources. The same also applied to the data for Guatemala. The Committee had decided to seek the advice of the General Assembly with regard to the application of Article 19 to Kyrgyzstan, and had requested up-to-date information from Guatemala and the Dominican Republic to enable it to assess their requests in connection with Article 19. Guatemala had subsequently made the necessary payment to exempt it from the application of that Article.

8. The Committee had been unable to give a specific response to Iraq's request for a waiver of Article 19, and had recalled that, in the context of the current scale, Iraq had benefited from the mitigation procedure and that price-adjusted rates of exchange, rather than market exchange rates, had been used to address fluctuations in Iraq's domestic prices.

9. Following the admission of Palau to the United Nations, the Committee recommended that its rate of assessment for the current scale period should be 0.01 per cent.

10. Mr. MULLER (Marshall Islands) expressed the hope that the discrepancies characterizing the current scale of assessments would be addressed by the Fifth Committee during the fiftieth session. In particular the principle of capacity to pay was not applied to all Member States on an equal basis. Many countries, especially smaller developing countries, were assessed at disproportionately high rates. As both the Ad Hoc Working Group and the Committee on Contributions had noted, the floor rate was too high for small countries. Given the general consensus on that point, action to abolish or significantly reduce the floor rate should be taken at the current session. According to the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management, the reduction of the rate would not have any significant impact on the Organization and it might allow small States which were not Members of the Organization to join.

11. With regard to peace-keeping, his country felt that it had been unfairly classified in group C. A reduction in the floor rate should also be reflected in the peace-keeping scale.

12. Various issues which should have been resolved were still outstanding. It was, for example, absurd that Yugoslavia was being assessed when the State in question had ceased to exist. As for South Africa, the arrears accrued by the racist apartheid Government should be forgiven so as to allow the current democratic Government to use its resources for nation-building. The former communist countries should also be assessed fairly, taking into account their current difficulties.

13. It was extremely difficult to understand how the broader question of arrears had become so serious. All States had a treaty obligation to pay their assessments in full and on time. They also had ample opportunity not to make excessive demands on the Organization. Once expenditure was agreed, however,

delegations must pay up. His own delegation was completely up to date in its payments, and hoped to continue to make prompt payments in the years ahead.

AGENDA ITEM 119: PATTERN OF CONFERENCES (A/50/32, A/50/263 and Add.1, A/50/288 and A/50/404)

14. Mr. VARELA (Chairman of the Committee on Conferences), introducing the report of the Committee on Conferences (A/50/32), said that, in accordance with its biennial programme of work, the Committee had devoted much of its time in 1995 to meetings-related issues.

15. It had sought to prepare a draft calendar that met the needs of the Organization as a whole, while avoiding any overlapping of meetings in the same sector of activity at the same conference location. The arrangements referred to in General Assembly resolution 49/221 A, paragraph 5, had been taken into account in the proposals for 1996 and would also be taken into account when the revised calendar for 1997 was drafted. The Committee recommended the draft calendar of conferences and meetings for the biennium 1996-1997 for adoption by the General Assembly.

16. The Committee was concerned that the overall utilization factor for conference services had decreased from 84 per cent in 1993 to 77 per cent in 1994, and had thus fallen below the established benchmark figure of 80 per cent. It was also concerend that the proportion of bodies utilizing more than the established benchmark percentage of conference-servicing resources had declined from 77 per cent in 1993 to 62 per cent in 1994 and that a large number of bodies had utilization factors below the 80 per cent benchmark. The Committee would continue to review a core sample of organs, including itself, for inclusion in the statistical analysis. It had also requested the Secretariat to refine the methodology for calculating utilization rates.

17. In recent years the Committee had consulted the chairmen of organs whose utilization factors had been below the benchmark figure for three sessions. That had produced useful exchanges of information. In that connection, the Committee on Information had decided that its eighteenth session should not last more than 10 days. The Committee on Conferences would invite the chairmen of subsidiary bodies which had utilized less than 80 per cent of their conference resources in 1994 to report on measures to improve their utilization rate and to assess their real needs, with a view to reducing the conference resources requested.

18. The Committee had again considered the issue of conference resources and facilities and improved coordination within the United Nations system. In that regard, it urged the Secretariat to share the translation workload among the various duty stations with a view to reducing translation-related costs, and to emphasize the need for the most effective possible use of conference facilities at duty stations outside Headquarters. The headquarters rule must be strictly enforced in the case of bodies whose headquarters were underutilized.

19. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 49/221 B, the United Nations Administrative Tribunal, the First Committee, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (in connection with the

observance of international days of solidarity) and the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, had submitted justifications for the continuation of their current entitlement to meeting records and the Committee recommended that their entitlement should be continued. The Committee on Conferences also recommended that the General Assembly should endorse the decision of the Special Committee of 24 to replace its verbatim records by summary records, and had noted with interest the decision taken by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to replace its verbatim records by unedited transcripts. Other bodies should review their use of summary and verbatim records with a view to making more general use of such transcripts.

20. The Committee felt that the introduction of technology-intensive methods of work in the translation services had much to commend it as a means of ensuring the provision of high-quality translation service in a timely and cost-effective manner. The Committee was in favour of the more rapid introduction of new technology, in full consultation with Member States and the relevant intergovernmental bodies.

21. The Committee welcomed the initiative of the Secretariat in seeking the opinions of delegations on the quality of conference services, and noted its intention to conduct a more wide-ranging survey. It encouraged the Secretariat to organize such surveys on a regular basis.

22. The Committee recalled the principle of the equality of the official languages and emphasized the need for strict compliance with the resolutions and rules establishing language arrangements for different bodies. In particular, resources must be made available to guarantee the timely translation of documents into the different official and working languages and to ensure their simultaneous distribution in those languages.

23. The Committee on Conferences was determined to enable Member States to enjoy a consistently high level of conference services in the most cost-effective way. He trusted that its report would be approved by consensus.

24. Mr. SEVAN (Assistant Secretary-General for Conference and Support Services) reminded the Committee that the Secretary-General had emphasized the need for enhanced resource utilization in conference services as one of the main objectives to be achieved by the Secretariat through improved management. In the area of conference services, maximum efficiency was not a goal to be reached at some future time but an immediate necessity. The demand for documentation, staff resources and physical facilities had continued to increase. For example, in 1989 Headquarters units had been responsible for 3,000 meetings with full services. In 1994 that figure had increased to 3,581, and the projection for 1995 was 3,850. A changing pattern in the demand for conference services had become evident recently: while the number of Security Council meetings had declined from a record of 438 meetings and informal consultations of the whole in 1994 to 299 during the current year, the demand for services of the Fifth Committee and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) had not followed suit.

25. In 1990 the Fifth Committee had held 126 meetings; in 1994 it had held 258 and during the current year, even before beginning the substantive work of the fiftieth session, it had held 113 meetings. ACABQ had held 109 meetings in 1990, 296 in 1994 and 222 meetings in 1995 up to the end of September.

26. Unfortunately, the biennial planning process allowed little flexibility for growth in meetings activity. At the time the calendar was adopted, the requirements of those organs, and others like the General Assembly Working Groups dealing with the financial situation of the Organization, the membership of the Security Council and an Agenda for Peace, not to mention bodies that had been established during the biennium or bodies set up by the Economic and Social Council, could not be foreseen with any accuracy.

27. The current biennial calendar of conferences adopted by the General Assembly in 1993 included approximately 6,140 scheduled meetings with full services at Headquarters. By the end of 1995, some 1,150 additional meetings would have been added. Thus in 1993, when requirements for the current biennium had been estimated, a workload 20 per cent less had been planned than the volume of activity that had developed later. Any additions were supposed to be absorbed within existing resources, but, after a certain point quite early in the biennium, resources for additional activities had simply not been available. It had therefore become impossible to meet the rising demand at current levels of capacity, not simply in terms of staff resources but also in terms of the physical facilities at Headquarters.

28. Headquarters had only 15 meeting rooms equipped for simultaneous interpretation, and only 6 of those were large enough to hold the full membership of the Organization. Accommodating close to 4,000 meetings with interpretation per year in those limited facilities required a continuous juggling act that not only strained planning capacity but, more importantly, inconvenienced delegations and disrupted working arrangements.

29. Meetings of regional and other groups had probably been hit hardest, and the number of such meetings had been increasing at the same pace as others. In 1993 there had been 601 such meetings; in 1994 there had been 771. Although not legislatively entitled to services, most of the groups involved had repeatedly stated that they could not work effectively without them. In turn, without the preparatory work done at those meetings, at times it had not been possible for regular organs to complete their deliberations. In 1994 it had been necessary to decline full services to 149 meetings of those and other groups that had requested them. During the current year the number of requests declined had risen to 202 thus far.

30. The cost of producing documentation in New York and Geneva alone for the biennium 1992-1993 had been $290 million, and, despite efforts to reduce such expenditures, the figure was expected to increase by $5 million during the biennium 1994-1995.

31. Although translation workloads had seemed to stabilize in 1994 with only a 4 per cent increase over 1993 (for a total of 335,000 pages), projections for 1995 were currently running very close to the previous year's record high.

Documentation for the current session of the General Assembly already totalled 15,000 pages, all of which had to be processed in the six official languages.

32. On the other hand, there had been no sign of a levelling off of the output of the print shop at Headquarters in terms of printed pages: 749 million in 1993, 775 million in 1994, and a conservative estimate of 790 million in 1995.

33. Referring to the enormous amount of waste paper recycled by the United Nations, which currently averaged 1,000 tons a year, he urged delegations to stop asking for documents which they did not really need. Many documents and publications were simply being thrown away as soon as they were received by delegations and the Secretariat. He indicated to the Committee that the Secretary-General had taken a close personal interest in the problem of waste paper.

34. In an effort to alleviate the problem of waste, distribution in the Secretariat had been cut back by two thirds and stocks by one half. The distribution of publications in-house had been discontinued. Those measures would reduce print runs by approximately 13 per cent, representing a reduction of over 100 million printed pages a year at Headquarters. Similar action was being planned at other duty stations.

35. In addition, print runs had been adjusted to reflect actual demand, but that task was more difficult since demand at the delegations' counter and at document booths in conference rooms was harder to predict. Delegations kept picking up documents and then leaving them behind or throwing them away, knowing that another copy would always be available. In addition, deferral of agenda items from one session to another, a growing practice, usually involved rerolling the same documents or producing updated versions.

36. Sets of documents and publications placed in the Mission boxes every morning were frequently opened and immediately dumped, or never picked up at all. In future, it would be assumed that, if documents were not picked up, the Mission concerned was not interested in them; the boxes would no longer be filled after three days with no pick-up.

37. A number of suggestions on how to control and limit documentation had been discussed at the Inter-Agency Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications, a gathering of experienced conference service managers from the United Nations system, other international organizations and interested governmental language services. It had been agreed that very little could be done unless users were willing to scale down their requirements, for example by ceasing to ask for recurrent reports which might not be as valid as when initially requested, by accepting oral reports instead of documents, by combining two or more reports into one document, and by limiting their agendas.

38. He cited the following examples of improved efficiency. The Committee on Conferences had considered 17 written documents at its substantive session of 1994, but, by combining topics and requesting oral presentations, it had managed to reduce the number of its documents to only 7 during the current year. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space had decided to have unedited transcripts of its proceedings instead of traditional verbatim records; the

amount of paper involved had not actually been reduced, but the cost of producing its records had been cut by two thirds (from $13,800 to $6,500 per meeting). Finally, some $1.8 million had been saved on the provision of verbatim records for the First Committee by having those records drafted after the regular fall session of the General Assembly on the basis of sound recordings.

39. Reminding the Committee that quality was just as important as quantity, he reported that significant gains in productivity had been achieved in Conference Services through more advanced technology and better management. He expected to see further progress in cost-effectiveness through the expanded use of contractual arrangements for translation, and as a result of an efficiency study of printing operations. Remote translation had already proved highly successful in servicing the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing and was being planned for the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Human Settlements in Istanbul. However, although he had hoped that increased productivity would have led to qualitative improvements, inevitably those successes had been overtaken by rising workload levels.

40. Direct contact with delegations was being maintained to elicit feedback on specific improvements. As an example of one positive development, he cited the success of the recently instituted arrangements and facilities for bilateral meetings and contacts at Headquarters. To date more than 600 meetings had been held and, for once, established capacity had proved sufficient for the demand.

41. He emphasized that the Secretary-General had directed all programme managers to take the necessary measures to ensure efficiency in operations and cost-effectiveness in activities. The proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 reflected fully the efficiency measures already taken, and further measures would be taken. The Secretary-General had already established an Efficiency Board under the chairmanship of the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management.

42. Efficiency measures on the part of the Secretariat alone were not sufficient, particularly in the area of conference services. Member States had to take the necessary action to curtail their appetite for reports, and not to request additional reports without deciding to forgo other reports - some of which had been produced year after year - some of them based on mandates given 10, 20, or even 50 years earlier. Too many reports were rarely read, let alone referred to in the work of the Committees. Accordingly, the challenge of efficiency and cost-effectiveness was not only for the Secretariat but equally, in fact more so, for Member States.

AGENDA ITEM 116: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997 (continued) (A/50/6 (vols. I and II), A/50/7 and A/50/16)

43. Mr. GJESDAL (Norway), said that his delegation was concerned at the Secretary-General's statement that the regular budget had run out of cash and that the United Nations had been obliged to borrow from peace-keeping operations. The Nordic countries had called on all Member States to fulfil their financial obligations in full and on time, otherwise any consensus on the proposed programme budget would be of no avail.

44. Further attention had to be devoted to the ordering of priorities and the continuing relevance of various mandated activities in future programme budgets. The United Nations should concentrate on realistic goals and on areas where it had comparative advantages and could make an impact. In other areas it should consider discontinuing certain roles and activities. In future, the setting of priorities in the medium-term plan should entail greater emphasis on identifying redundant and obsolete mandates and a discussion of the need to continue mandates for which it had proved impossible to marshal the necessary resources.

45. He reminded the Committee that the complex intergovernmental machinery and decision-making process in the United Nations had been one of the greatest challenges to forward planning. Mandates and activities had not grown in accordance with an overall predetermined plan. Instead, the Organization had reacted over the years to perceived global priorities as articulated by the Member States. Unless agreement was sought on the role that those intergovernmental directives should play in the preparation of medium-term plans, past frustrations in planning would continue into the next century.

46. Norway endorsed the four areas that had been earmarked for special attention in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997, namely the strengthening of the Organization's capacity to deal with political and peace-keeping activities, the reinforcement of international and regional cooperation for development, the enhancement of support for humanitarian affairs and human rights, and an increase in the capacity for internal oversight.

47. Norway was impressed by the management improvements that had been instituted during the current biennium and by the intense scrutiny of future activities that had taken place. While he congratulated the Secretary-General on having submitted a budget proposal which represented a reduction compared to the budget for the current biennium, he said that any reduction in budget estimates should not lead to the conclusion that there was a diminished need for the United Nations.

48. Norway shared the view of the European Union that the overall proportion of the programme budget devoted to human rights remained inadequate and did not reflect the priority which should be attached to that area. His delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's request for an increase in the number of posts for core personnel involved in peace-keeping to be funded from the regular budget, as well as the requests for additional posts for humanitarian assistance programmes and for the new Office of Internal Oversight Services. As for the post of Focal Point for Women, he believed that it should be included in the regular budget, not funded from extrabudgetary resources. Generally speaking, the United Nations should have the capability to attract and retain staff of the highest calibre.

49. Mr. MACEDA (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, expressed serious concern regarding the Organization's current financial condition. Failure by Member States to honour their financial obligations had adversely affected the Organization's capacity to carry out the mandates they had entrusted to it, particularly those in the development field, while internal borrowing from peace-keeping accounts would lead to further delay in the reimbursement of troop-contributing countries.

50. He was also concerned that the reduction in resources proposed for the biennium 1996-1997 would leave less than the amount needed to carry out all mandated activities. He welcomed the efficiency gains resulting from such measures as the introduction of new technology and endorsed the view expressed by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) in paragraph 19 of its report (A/50/7) that it would be for the Secretary-General to make appropriate programmatic proposals to the General Assembly in order to achieve further savings. He expressed concern at the tendency of some bodies to involve themselves in administrative and budgetary matters which were properly the responsibility of the Fifth Committee.

51. At its forty-ninth session, the General Assembly had been unable to reach consensus on the Secretary-General's proposed revisions to the medium-term plan because some of those revisions had been drafted without respect for existing legislative mandates. The current medium-term plan, as revised and approved by Member States, should serve as the framework for the formulation of biennial budgets.

52. Noting the new format of the budget documents, he expressed concern that in the budget presentation, areas of particular interest to developing countries, namely, the economic development of developing countries, Africa's economic recovery, drug control and environmental protection, had been lumped together, despite the increasing number of activities and programmes of action related to those areas, while internal oversight had been presented as a priority, even though the Group of 77 and China viewed internal oversight only as a tool aimed at strengthening the capabilities of the Secretary-General in the performance of his duties, and not as a priority in itself.

53. He welcomed efforts to eliminate wasteful expenditure and improve efficiency, but reminded the Committee that cost-cutting and productivity gains were not the objectives of the Organization. It should be the Committee's constant endeavour to provide the United Nations with the financial provisions to fulfil all the mandates laid out by the General Assembly in pursuit of the Organization's goals. He also requested the Secretariat to provide the Committee with organizational charts of each Department, based on the budget proposals, accompanied by definitions of the tasks entrusted to each unit so as to facilitate the Committee's examination of proposals for the redistribution, creation and suppression of posts. The Organization's primary asset was its personnel; it must be able to attract and retain staff members of the highest calibre, free from the distraction of the current precarious cash-flow situation and in a structure which reflected the principle of equitable geographical representation.

54. Mr. DEINEKO (Russian Federation) said that one of the reasons for the swift growth in the United Nations budget had been the lack of serious analysis of the Organization's budgetary expenditures in view of new political and economic realities and the need to identify and eliminate obsolete or redundant activities. He hoped that consideration of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 would result in serious efforts to eliminate such activities so that budgetary resources could be reoriented towards activities of greater priority. He hoped that the Secretariat would submit specific proposals to that effect.

55. Over the years, growth in the size of Secretariat staff had been swift and uneven, and there had been little effort to implement new decisions and programmes using available personnel. The redistribution of personnel among the Organization's programmes should become an indispensable part of its dynamic functioning and of efforts to improve its efficiency. Some efforts in that direction had already been made in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997, which focused more on specific programmes than previous budgets had done.

56. He welcomed the timely preparation and improved format of the budget document, as well as the active involvement in its preparation of programme managers who were clearly interested in the possibilities of savings and the redistribution of resources. There were, however, several areas which the Advisory Committee had identified as areas where economies could be achieved without reductions in appropriations at the present time. Those areas included productivity gains that could be realized as a result of technological innovations, a review of the publications programme, and control of expenditures on consultants. Further potential savings could be achieved through measures to reduce travel expenses and temporary assistance expenditures, a reduction in the ratio of support personnel to professional staff, an increase in the vacancy level, and the deferral of non-essential repair and construction works.

57. Despite the concern felt by many Member States about additional expenditures resulting from recosting for currency fluctuation and inflation and the failure of past efforts to address the problem, the current budget proposals once again appeared to lack a transparent methodology and mechanisms for a solution to the problem. His delegation advocated the absorption of those expenditures through the redistribution of priorities and the postponement of low-priority programmes.

58. Mr. Wonil CHO (Republic of Korea) said that his delegation fully endorsed the statement made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts to minimize resource requirements without undermining the delivery of any mandated activities. Noting that the proposed budget level represented a reduction against 1994-1995 levels, while projected expenditure, after recosting, showed a 3 per cent increase, his delegation believed that further cost-effective measures could be taken, based on the recommendations of ACABQ.

59. His delegation believed that the reduction in the programme budget should in no way affect the implementation of all mandated programmes and activities. It therefore noted with satisfaction that the proposed efficiency savings had been achieved through the rationalization and improvement of work programmes and methods and through other cost-saving measures. At the same time, his delegation welcomed the enhancement of the capacity to deliver political and peace-keeping activities while accruing savings through cost-effective measures. In addition, it commended the efforts of the Secretary-General in the area of human rights and humanitarian activities.

60. His delegation was concerned, however, by the proposed decrease in resources for international and regional cooperation for development. That was not consistent with the high priority placed on the economic development of

developing countries, particularly the economic recovery of African countries. In addition, while it supported moves to strengthen the Office of Internal Oversight Services, it believed that any increase in the level of resources for internal oversight should not be achieved at the expense of the Organization's other mandated activities.

61. His delegation was also concerned by plans to decrease the number of posts by 109 and maintained that budget constraints should not be allowed to have an adverse impact on the morale of the staff, since, as the Secretary-General had stated the effectiveness of the Organization depended on the performance of its staff.

62. With regard to the current cash-flow crisis, he urged Member States, once the budget was approved, to meet their financial obligations by paying their assessments in full, on time and without conditions.

63. Finally, he commended the Secretariat staff on their outstanding work in ensuring the early submission of the proposed programme budget.

64. Mr. SHAH (India) expressed his delegation's concern that the projected level of resources for international economic development had declined by more than 4 per cent in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997, and that such a decrease would not permit adequate funding of follow-up of plans of action adopted at recent international conferences. The United Nations was obligated to continue to make adequate financial provisions for follow-up activities related to global economic policies and development.

65. He welcomed the creation of a new budget section relating to African economic recovery and development, and called for a detailed review of resource levels in order to ensure sufficient funding for activities and programmes planned under that section. He also stressed the importance of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and its relationship with the World Trade Organization (WTO). UNCTAD resources must be adequate to meet its mandated activities.

66. In view of the ongoing transformation in the character of United Nations peace-keeping activities, he expressed of hope that the savings to be realized from reduced peace-keeping expenditures would be directed to United nations development activities.

67. In the area of human rights, the main thrust of the Centre for Human Rights should be the provision of technical assistance and human rights education, and must be compatible with the prevailing local cultural and social ethos. The economic, social, cultural and civil aspects of human rights, in particular the right to development, had not received adequate attention or resources. He hoped that the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 would include a subprogramme which laid the basis for a Convention based on the Declaration on the Right to Development. He also called for adequate funding to carry out the mandate to combat terrorism.

68. His delegation supported the strengthening of the Office of Internal Oversight Services. Any expansion of that Office should, however, give due regard to the principle of geographical representation.

69. The overall administrative costs of the Organization still required significant pruning. The credibility of the entire reform exercise would hinge on the ability of the Department of Administration and Management to prune its own budget and staff. It was therefore difficult to understand the proposal for the creation of additional posts in that Department.

70. Mr. AMORIM (Brazil) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Brazil believed that the current medium-term plan was of value in that it enabled Member States to work together, thereby consolidating mandates which derived from a variety of legislative sources, and gave an indication of the Secretariat's view of how those mandates were to be implemented.

71. Commending the Secretariat on its timely preparation of the documentation before the Committee, he welcomed the three-phased approach to the preparation of the budget proposed by the Secretary-General. Noting that the proposed programme budget represented a 3.5 per cent reduction of 1994-1995 levels in a context of growing demands on the Organization, he suggested that a breakdown should be provided, by specific areas, of the efficiency gains and adjustments which had made that reduction possible. Brazil was, in particular, concerned that only one priority of the medium-term plan and resolutions and mandates - international peace and security - had been kept separate in the proposed programme budget, while four others - international cooperation for development, in particular for developing countries; Africa: critical economic situation, recovery and development; environment; and international drug control - had been lumped together under the heading "Enhancement of international and regional cooperation for development". While it noted that preventive diplomacy and peacemaking were highly cost-effective activities for the maintenance of international peace and security, Brazil had doubts regarding the need to transfer 26 posts from the support account for peace-keeping operations to the regular budget and questioned whether there was any legislative mandate for such a transfer. The emphasis on preventive diplomacy and peace-keeping was not matched by a corresponding emphasis on the Organization's role in the promotion of development, yet underdevelopment had a serious negative impact on the preservation of peace and security.

72. In the field of human rights, he recalled that the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) and the General Assembly, during their most recent sessions, had been unable to agree on the revision of programme 35 of the medium-term plan. Brazil attached great importance to United Nations human rights activities and firmly supported the allocation of the necessary personnel and resources to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. It also set high store by the strengthening of the rule of law as set forth in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

73. While his delegation recognized the importance of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, it doubted whether the Office necessarily qualified as a

priority area or could be described as a "programme", and it noted with concern that the increase in the proposed additional number of posts for the Office accounted for nearly 20 per cent of all new posts proposed.

74. His delegation agreed that further efforts should be made to rationalize and simplify the Organization's work methods, but stressed that the purpose for which it had been set up was the attainment of the goals set forth in San Francisco, not mere cost-effectiveness.

75. In conclusion, he reiterated that efforts to enhance the budget process and the workings of the Organization would bear little result unless Member States paid their contributions in full, on time and without conditions. Payment of assessed contributions was a Charter obligation of Member States and not a favour to the United Nations, nor should it be used as leverage for other objectives. Despite its own current difficulties, Brazil had eliminated all its outstanding contributions to the regular budget and had paid the bulk of its contributions to peace-keeping operations. It urged other Member States - especially the largest contributors - to follow suit.

76. Mr. JU Kuilin (People's Republic of China) commended the Secretariat on its timely submission of the proposed programme budget and the improved format and agreed in principle with the statement made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

77. He noted that, while the significant reduction in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1977 seemed to warrant commendation, the continued reduction of the United Nations budget at a time when the Organization faced growing challenges, particularly in the area of economic development, was cause for concern. China welcomed efforts to enhance the Organization's efficiency, but maintained that the purpose of enhanced efficiency was not to save costs, but to improve programme delivery. Even greater concern attached to the substantial reduction in extrabudgetary resources for 1996-1997, which would inevitably have an adverse impact on the implementation of various programmes and the future role of the United Nations.

78. Noting the confusion surrounding the process of priority-setting in the preparation of programme budgets, he said that priority areas should be determined in conformity with the interests and requirements of Member States through a process of consultation; they should not be based on the whim of certain Member States. His delegation maintained that the current priority areas for United Nations activities should be as set out in the medium-term plan and endorsed by the General Assembly, namely: the maintenance of peace and security; economic development of the developing countries; economic recovery and development of Africa; protection of the environment; and control of narcotic drugs. Among those areas economic development should be the first priority and United Nations activities in the field of economic development should therefore be strengthened; current trends were to scale them down and steadily reduce the resources devoted to economic cooperation and development in the budget. Budget cuts in development areas, such as international and regional cooperation for development, had not been adequately explained and further explanation was required from the Secretariat. In addition, follow-up action to the recent world conferences in Copenhagen, Cairo, Barbados and

Beijing was essential to the promotion of development, yet no arrangements had been included in the budget for the implementation of the programmes of action adopted at those conferences.

79. China strongly believed that proposed budget cuts should be carefully scrutinized in analytical reports submitted for the consideration of the General Assembly and should not be based on the mere wish of a few Member States. In that context, his delegation shared the view expressed by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 20 of its report (A/50/7).

80. The significant increase in resources for human rights programmes, (section 21) was in glaring contrast to the inadequacy of resources for economic development. He pointed out that neither the revision to programme 35 of the medium-term plan, nor section 21 of the programme budget submitted by the Secretary-General at the previous session had been approved by the General Assembly. That cast serious doubt on the legal basis for the formulation of the programme budget. In addition, CPC had failed to reach consensus on that item of the budget, while, as noted in the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (A/49/892) and in the report of ACABQ, the external auditors had identified weaknesses and administration shortcomings in the Human Rights Centre.

81. Finally, he stressed the need to maintain normal budget procedures, as required by the relevant General Assembly resolutions. The substantive committees should review the various activities and submit specific recommendations. The views of these committees should be fully respected when the budget was prepared and due emphasis should be given to the important role played by CPC and ACABQ in the review and approval of the programme budget.

AGENDA ITEM 158: PROGRAMME PLANNING (A/49/6, A/49/16, A/49/99 and Add.1, A/49/135 and Add.1, A/49/301 and A/49/958; A/50/16; A/C.5/49/27 and Add.1, A/C.5/49/28 and Add.1; E/1994/4, E/1994/19 and E/1995/21)

82. Mr. TAKASU (Controller), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the prototype of a new format of the medium-term plan (A/49/301), said that the Committee had decided, after extensive discussions, to defer consideration of the proposed prototype, which had been prepared in 1994, to the fiftieth session so that it could be reviewed in the light of the Advisory Committee's report.

83. The prototype had been developed in consultation with interested delegations and CPC, on the basis of recommendations made in previous years both by CPC and by the General Assembly. The effectiveness of the current medium-term plan format had been called into question by the Secretariat, as well as by certain Member States for a number of reasons, including the disproportionate emphasis it placed on activities and output, rather than objectives, and its failure to state those objectives with sufficient precision. The current medium-term plan contained only a list of activities and gave no clear insight into their organization; nor did it provide a direct link between programme structure and the offices responsible for implementation. Consequently, no accountability linkage could be established. For that reason, the budget structures and programme structures lacked congruence.

84. The new prototype was an endeavour to address those problems and represented a significant departure from the 1992-1997 model. Instead of an introduction with a simple summary, it aimed to provide a perspective of the Organization's work for the next four years. In addition, the programme framework was different: each programme fell under the responsibility of a particular office, providing for enhanced accountability. The programme structure was directly linked to the structure of the budget, which was more focused, emphasizing what programmes expected to achieve, rather than the activities undertaken. Each programme was divided into several subprogrammes and specific departments or offices would be responsible for the various subprogrammes, thus establishing a direct linkage between programmes and the budget.

85. The prototype aimed to facilitate the intergovernmental review of the overall direction of the Organization's work and to make a clear link between organizational and programmatic structures, forming an integral part of the system of accountability which the Secretariat was endeavouring to establish. He hoped that the proposed new format would meet with the approval of the Committee.

86. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) introduced the Advisory Committee's report on the prototype of a new format of the medium-term plan (A/49/958).

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.